**Ray Howard Garrison**
**The Army Experience—December 1953-December 1955**

On December 7, 1953, My brother Roy and I reported to the induction center in Burlington, Iowa, and entered the United States Army. The Army took us by bus from Burlington to Des Moines, Iowa, where we received our physical examinations to be sure we were fit for military duty. There I ran into a couple of problems. Roy passed his physical in a breeze, but when the doctor listened to my heart, he quickly detected the damaged valve that had resulted from my pleurisy condition some years before. He stated that he would not allow me to be inducted into military service. I panicked, because the Army was critical to my plans for a mission and further education. I explained to him that I had been a champion half miler in high school, and that my heart didn't really bother me at all. (This was not entirely truthful, because strong exertion, such as in running, would cause a painful, cramping feeling in my chest.) He then had me run in place for a few minutes, and reexamined my heart. He listened for a long while, and then had me run in place again and do some exercises, too. All the while I had a prayer in my heart that he would let me in. He then listened to my heart a third time, and asked me if I was really sure I wanted to be in the Army. I assured him that I was, and to my great relief he signed my exam form. He specified, however, that I was to be classified 3C, which meant only light, nonphysical duty.

My problems weren't over, though. The last part of the physical exam was to be sure that all our joints and limbs were flexible and worked properly, and I had a stiff index finger on my left hand from the accident a year and a half before. The examiners had us line up, ten across. As the medical people watched, we were instructed to do sit ups, bend our arms, and then hold out our hands and open and close our fingers. I knew what I had to do. As I was asked to open and close my fingers, I grabbed the left index finger with my left thumb and pulled the finger closed. The pain was so great that it brought tears to my eyes, but I was able to pass the exam, and I was in the Army. We were sworn in, and I was given the Army identification number, U.S. 55388844.

We were immediately put on buses, and driven to Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, for basic training. We arrived just after midnight and were herded into a barracks and taught how to make a bed, Army style. We then each had to make our own bed, after which we tore them up and retired for the night, or for what was left of it (by that time it was about one a.m.). I got a top bunk and was soon fast asleep. At four a.m. a sergeant came running into our barracks, ran down to the end, stopped right by my bunk, and blew his whistle. I awoke with a start—groggy, confused, and not remembering where I was. At the command, "Get out of those &#@%?$!

beds," I jumped out, not remembering that I was in the top bunk. I came crashing down onto the floor, which the sergeant thought was immensely funny. We were herded outside, and while standing at attention in freezing December weather, the roll was called. The wind was blowing so hard that we couldn't hear the names. The sergeant became very angry, cursing us for our stupidity.

It took over an hour to call the roll, since there were over four hundred in our group. All the while we were standing at attention in freezing weather. The sergeant and other NCOs (non-commissioned officers) then criticized us for our dress, pointing out that most of us were dressed in jeans and other casual clothing, whereas a few of our group had enough pride to wear suits when they entered the Army. All of this was accompanied by the vilest cursing and profaning the name of Deity. Those dressed in suits were told to step forward— they were going to get a special privilege. One fellow from Chicago was wearing a beautiful cashmere suit. These men were taken to the mess hall and put on KP (Kitchen Police: that is, washing dishes, pots, and pans, and scrubbing the mess hall). The fellow in the cashmere suit was ordered to scrub the pots and pans; within a few hours his suit was completely ruined. For breakfast that morning, we had burned toast without butter or jam, and thick, cold oatmeal without milk (it was so early that the milk hadn't been delivered yet to the mess halls). I ate what I could and hoped that things would improve.

We had been warned by our brother, Bill, to not volunteer for anything, and we took his advice. Others seemed to fall into every trap that the NCOs laid. The second morning at roll call, the NCOs asked how many men were college graduates. A few raised their hands, and they were promptly marched into the mess hall for KP. About sixteen hours later, these men came dragging back into the barracks, covered with grease and dirt, exhausted, but wiser men—college degrees notwithstanding. During the day, the NCOs came around looking for men who were experienced truck drivers. Again a few hands went up, and these men were put to work hauling rocks in a wheelbarrow. On the third morning at roll call, the NCOs said that word had come from headquarters to find men who were expert swimmers; the Army wanted to train them as pearl divers. Again, hands went up. These men were marched off to the mess hall and sat in front of huge vats filled with potatoes, covered with water. The potatoes had to be pealed by hand. Sixteen hours later, these men also came back to the barracks, sadder but wiser men.

We stayed in the induction center for three days, after which we were transferred on base to our basic training unit. The last event in the induction center was haircuts. We were taken to a huge barbershop. The sergeant picked out one fellow who had beautifully styled, wavy hair. He was sat in a chair and the barber asked him how he wanted it cut. The fellow gave intricate instructions on how to do it just right, whereupon the barber set his clippers on 1/4 inch length and ran a cut right down the middle of the fellow's head. Two hours later, we all looked like plucked chickens and were marched off to our training companies.

Roy and I were assigned to the 154th Hvy Tk Co. We were fortunate to get a superb company commander—Captain Isidore LeClair. He was one of only three or four Army officers for whom I ever had any respect. A superb leader, he was always in front leading his men, not following in a jeep as most officers were inclined to do. When we marched twenty miles through

a raging blizzard, Captain LeClair was always right with us, and when we were in the field, he always ate the same food that we ate.

Basic training lasted eight weeks. Without question, it was the hardest eight weeks that I have ever experienced. We were told that it was the Army's intention to make us mean enough to kill without hesitation, and I think I probably could have killed without hesitation at the end of that eight weeks. Our training was through the coldest part of the winter--December, January, and early February--which added to our misery. The food was bad and there never was enough. We usually got up at four a.m., and we were off to our training sites by five a.m. This was always before the milk deliveries, so we rarely had milk for breakfast. The staple breakfast was cooked oatmeal, coffee, and toast. I couldn't stand the oatmeal without milk, and of course we didn't drink coffee, so our breakfast was literally bread (toasted) and water. Occasionally we would have scrambled eggs, but the eggs were dehydrated, only partially cooked, and, in the opinion of most of us, were not edible. Lunch and dinner were both usually eaten in the field, and served only with coffee. Thus, Roy and I were forced to eat these meals without any liquid other than the water that might remain in our canteens. In the field, the food often came to us nearly frozen since the cooks made little attempt to keep it warm. All of this was quite unnecessary, since the Army provided plenty of food, and it was of high quality. But officers and NCOs would steal it, either to sell or to take home, and leave only minimum amounts for the men. The cooks made little effort to prepare what food we did get in an appetizing way.

Much of the training was in the form of harassment, rather than instruction. As an example, each of us was required to qualify on the .50 caliber machine gun. We rose at 4 a.m. as usual, and marched ten miles through a blizzard to the machine gun site. There we stood until the NCOs came who were to supervise our qualification. We then stood for several hours more waiting our turn, with the wind raging and the snow biting our faces. When our turn came, we each stepped up to the machine gun and fired three rounds, which took only about one second. We couldn't see what we were shooting at since the visibility was only ten feet or so due to the blinding snowstorm. We then stood for several more hours waiting for everyone to "qualify," after which we marched the ten miles back to the barracks. The training itself wasn't so hard, it was just the extreme physical conditions that we had to endure—little sleep, insufficient food, and long forced marches. Our boots were new and stiff, and most of us suffered terribly from blisters and bruised ankles.

On Saturday morning, we always had inspection. To prepare for it, we were up most (or sometimes all) of Friday night. Our weapons had to be cleaned until they shined, all of our gear had to be in perfect condition (after dragging it through rain, snow, and mud all week), and the building had to be spotless. This meant scrubbing the building literally from ceiling to floor. If any man received a "gig," he was put on KP duty for the weekend. If a building was found dirty, all the men were restricted to the company area on Sunday, which was supposed to be a day off.

The first Sunday on base Roy and I went looking for the LDS servicemen's group. We found that they met in one of the chapels on the base, and we managed to get there in time for the meetings. It was a fine group, having a number of returned missionaries as well as a number of career Army officers and their families. We were welcomed into the group, and attended

regularly throughout the time we were in Fort Leonard Wood.

It is difficult to know what to say about basic training, the experience was so awful. I lost a great deal of weight, and became very ill with a high fever in the last week. I refused to go to "sick call" however, since I might have been hospitalized. That would have meant dropping back to another basic training unit, and possibly having to repeat several weeks of training. I felt I would rather die than do that, so I endured the fever. About a week before basic training was over, we received our "orders" from division headquarters, which stated what we would be doing after basic training.

My orders were beautiful; I was to go to Fort Belvoir, Virginia, to train for the quartermaster corps. Roy's orders were the worst possible; he was to stay in Fort Leonard Wood for eight more weeks of advanced infantry training, which actually meant eight more weeks of basic training—only harder! We were stunned. It hadn't occurred to us that our orders wouldn't be the same. Since we were twins, we knew the Army had to keep us together if we requested it, so we put in a request to division headquarters to change Roy's orders to go with me to Fort Belvoir. A few days later new orders came down, but instead of changing Roy's orders, they changed mine to go with him into advanced infantry training! I could have cried, but there was nothing I could do.

We went home for a two week leave, most of which I spent in bed getting over my fever and recovering my strength. We returned to Fort Leonard Wood in late February, and spent March and April in advanced infantry training. Everything about basic was repeated, except now we also had to endure constant harassment from Sergeant Slavins, the first sergeant of the company. He was perhaps the vilest and most profane person that I encountered in the Army, and he loved to abuse his men. He would stand us at attention in the company street and blow his whistle. That would be a signal for us to race into the barracks, change our uniforms, and then race back out and stand at attention. We would be given only so many seconds to do this, and if every man (about 250 total) didn't make it back in time, the process would be repeated again and again. Other times at the blow of the whistle we would have to race into the barracks and take *everything* out into the company street—bunks, footlockers, storage cabinets, and all—within a given number of minutes. After several trips in and out, we would be exhausted, particularly since Sergeant Slavins always made us go through this ordeal after we had spent twelve or fourteen hours out in the field.

Near the end of the eight weeks, I received a terrible shock. I was in the company office one day, and one of the NCOs happened to notice in my records that I was a member of the LDS Church. He stated, "That's interesting, because Sergeant Slavins is LDS, too." I couldn't believe it! That immoral, profane, thieving, abusive person a member of the Church? Sergeant Slavins' face reddened, and he stated that he was a member, but not too active. I went back to my barracks in a state of shock, but I then fully understood something I had been told by the missionaries—that members of the Church who turn away from its principles often become the basest people of all.

The last event of our advanced infantry training was a week of living in the field. In April

we didn't have cold and snow to contend with, but we did have snakes, and they were thick in the rocky, brush strewn Missouri hills. The black boys from the south were particularly terrified of snakes. While in the field on a break one day, one black boy was dozing. Another boy sharpened a long stick with his knife, stuck the black boy with the pointed end, and shouted, "Snake." The poor fellow gave out a ghastly scream, turned as white as a pillow case, and raced off into the woods. The last night in the field we had a maneuver in which our company was to attack a hill controlled by "enemy" troops. I was stationed at the bottom of the hill as a sentry and the rest of the company started up the hill to attack the enemy position. About half way up, our company's men started firing their rifles (which contained blanks). When the firing started, I began to hear a rustling sound in the underbrush moving down the hill toward me. Suddenly realizing what was making the sound, I quickly climbed on top of a rock as scores of snakes (probably copperheads and rattlesnakes) went moving down the hill past me.

The week in the field ended our infantry training, and we had orders waiting for us when we got back to the barracks. Roy and I both had orders to stay in Fort Leonard Wood for another two months to attend carpenter school.

We had no idea why we had been chosen to go to carpenter school, but it was like a paid vacation after sixteen weeks of basic training. The food was excellent and plentiful, and the "training" was a breeze. Strangely enough, most of it was book training, rather than practical, on-the-job training, and a lesson could be learned in no time at all. We spent many hours lounging in the warm spring sun. Each week we were given an exam, and the person having the highest composite score at the end was to be given a special award for excellence. That sounded like fun to me, and I had the highest score on the first several exams. Unfortunately, I couldn't drive a nail very straight or saw a board evenly, and there began to be some murmuring among the real carpenters about the fact that I was number one in the class. I decided that it might not be a wise thing for me to get the award, and so I didn't do quite so well on the exams from then on. That seemed to make everyone happy.

At the end of six weeks of carpenter training, after which I still couldn't driving a nail straight or saw a board evenly, Roy and I were assigned as "permanent party" to the 54th Engr Bn (Engineer Battalion) in Fort Leonard Wood. This was devastating news since we had come to hate Fort Leonard Wood, but there was nothing we could do. After six months in the Army, we were still privates earning $85 per month. From this $85 we first paid our tithing. We then withheld $10 per month "spending money" and send the rest home to save for a mission. But we could see that what we were saving wasn't going to be enough to finance two years in the mission field. We knew that we had to get promotions if we were going to meet our savings goals. Unfortunately, promotions were slow in Fort Leonard Wood, and we were now "permanent party."

<u>The Army Experience--June 1954 to December 1954</u>

After a short leave at home in Burlington, Roy and I reported to the 54th Engr Bn in Fort Leonard Wood. We were assigned as carpenters, but there was no carpenter work to do so we were both issued a pick and a shovel and put to work digging trenches at various places on the

base. We were deeply discouraged at the thought of spending the next year and a half digging ditches. But we did nothing but swing picks and wield shovels from morning to night for about a month and a half. This seemed especially ironic in view of the fact that I had a 3C physical classification and was supposed to be assigned to nonphysical duties.

Then one afternoon word came down to the digging site that I was to clean up and report to company headquarters. I did so, and found that the company clerk needed help. He said that if I could type he would have me transferred into the office. Thank goodness for my typing classes in Horace Mann Junior High School! I assured him that I was a fine typist (I hadn't touched a typewriter in nearly six years), and so he put me to work. Fortunately, we worked in different rooms, so he couldn't see how laboriously slow I moved on the typewriter. I came in at night and practiced in order to improve my speed. About two weeks later the company clerk received orders to go to a training school that he had applied for, and after reviewing my file the company commander assigned me to be the new company clerk. I had scored in the ninety-ninth percentile in nearly all the tests that were given when I was inducted into the Army, and this really impressed the company commander. (My scores on these tests were what caused the company clerk to send for me in the first place). So I was the new company clerk, even though I had only a vague idea of what I was supposed to be doing.

I studied old files of letters and reports, as well as procedural manuals and anything else I could get my hands on, and somehow managed to limp along in the job. I slowly learned what to do and how to do it, and after about six weeks I began to gain some confidence in myself. Poor Roy had to continue slaving in the ditches all this time. But then a request came from Battalion Headquarters for an intelligent, dependable man to help with filing and other office work. I knew just the man, and asked the company commander if we could submit Roy's name. He agreed, and Roy left the ditches to become the assistant Battalion clerk.

This turned out to be a beautiful arrangement, with me in Company headquarters and Roy in Battalion headquarters. We had a direct pipeline into everything that went on. By this time I had become deeply concerned about the prospect of us having to stay at Fort Leonard Wood for our entire two-year term of service. I was also concerned about the slim prospect of either of us being promoted, since most of the promotion slots were being sent to Army units overseas. So I made these concerns a matter of fervent prayer for many weeks. We had always paid our tithing, so I knew we were worthy of a special blessing from the Lord. In addition to asking the Lord for help in getting out of Fort Leonard Wood, I also reminded Him of our need to save money for a mission. Without promotions I knew it would be impossible to meet our savings goals.

Then, in November, a few slots for promotion to Private First Class came to our Company. A large number of men in our Company had been in the Army longer than Roy and me. Therefore, they were ahead of us in the line for promotions, and we knew we wouldn’t be considered until after these men had received their stripes. But then an interesting thing happened. Captain Olsen, the company commander, knew that promotion slots wouldn’t be available again for many months, and he also knew that he would never be able to promote every eligible man in the company. After thinking the matter over, he decided that Roy and I were especially valuable men and so promoted us ahead of scores of other men in the company. We

had said nothing to Captain Olsen about our pressing need to be promoted, but we were overjoyed at his decision! Our pay jumped to $110 per month, and after paying our tithing we were able to increase our savings allotment substantially. I knew that the Lord had heard my prayers and had opened the way for Roy and me to receive a blessing in a most unusual manner.

My prayers were further answered the first of December when a request came to Battalion headquarters for two men to serve as cadre to a "carrier" company being shipped to Germany. A "carrier" company was a company of men just out of basic training that was going intact to Germany to serve as occupation troops. Men were needed to serve as cadre (or leaders) to the group, and our Battalion was to provide two such men. Roy immediately asked the Battalion first sergeant if he would send the request to our Company commander to fill, so the two men could be chosen from our Company. (There were some six or eight companies in the Battalion). The first sergeant agreed to do so. When the request came to our Company, I put Roy's name and my name on it, and I took it in to the company commander for his signature. He refused to sign the form; he said he would release Roy but not me, since I was needed as company clerk. He also said that in his opinion it was time for Roy and me to split up and go our separate ways.

I approached the Lord in fervent prayer many times over the next few days, asking him to soften the heart of the company commander. I then went back to the company commander again with my request. The old company clerk was back, and I tactfully reminded the company commander that the old clerk was school trained, whereas I was not. I was trained as a carpenter. I also pleaded that I had always wanted to see Europe, and this might be the only chance I would ever have to do so. He thought for a minute, and then laughed and said, "Oh well, I was young once, too," and signed the release form. We were on our way to Europe! The Lord had heard my prayers and answered them in what I considered to be a miraculous fashion.

<u>The Army Experience--December 1954 to December 1955</u>

After a ten-day leave at home, Roy and I reported to Camp Kilmer, New Jersey, on December 24, 1954. We weren't able to spend Christmas at home, but that didn't bother us in the least. After spending Christmas Eve in an Army barracks, we boarded ship on Christmas Day. Most of the men were extremely homesick, and their situation wasn't helped any by the fact that only one record was played over the sound system all day long. That record was "There's No Place Like Home for the Holidays." Several of the married men became so depressed that they jumped ship and deserted. Army deserters often fled to Canada to live; those who remained in the United States were caught, court martialed, and jailed.

Some men got seasick immediately on boarding the ship. I had heard that seasickness is mostly a mental thing, and seeing men get sick as soon as they stepped on the deck confirmed that in my mind. I resolved that I wouldn't get sick on the voyage.

Roy and I brought several boxes of Ritz crackers on board with us, since we had heard that they helped to keep the stomach settled. The crackers must have helped because neither or us got sick during the entire voyage. We also brought along a large number of nickels so we could buy candy from the vending machines. We had heard that nickels could be sold for about

fifty cents each on board ship, since the men used what few nickels they had very quickly. We found that there was, indeed, a great demand for nickels, and we easily sold the nickels that we didn't use. Although the food provided by the Army was plentiful, it was prepared without seasoning of *any* type and therefore was not very appetizing to eat. Thus, the demand for nickels to buy candy. Since we crossed the ocean in December, the water was extremely rough. Some men were so seasick that they were unable to get out of their bunks, and were seized with uncontrollable vomiting. The entire sleeping area carried a heavy stench, as did the mess hall area. Indeed, the common joke among the men was that you didn't have to see the mess hall menu to know what was being served that day. You just had to look on the floor outside the mess hall door.

Because of my experience as a company clerk in Fort Leonard Wood, I was appointed company clerk of our carrier company. The commanding officer was a young second lieutenant fresh out of officers' school. During the voyage, the thought occurred to me that we were a bona fide company and could promote people if we wanted to. Actually, you are supposed to have a "slot" or "allocation" in order to promote someone. But one of the cadre had been in the Army as long as Roy and me, and he still hadn't been promoted to PFC. So I decided to write up an order promoting him to PFC, and see if I could get the young lieutenant to sign it. I wrote up the order, and took it to the lieutenant. He was hesitant, but he finally signed it when I assured him that it would be all right. I then put the order in the man's personnel file, with a cover letter saying that the promotion should be processed when he reached his destination. I later heard that the promotion was accepted without question by the man's new company when he arrived in Germany. I was sorry then that I hadn't written up orders promoting Roy and me to corporal, but that may have been going a little too far.

We arrived in Bremerhaven, Germany, eight days after leaving New Jersey. We were loaded on a train and shipped to Leipheim, Germany, where our new base was located. Leipheim is located about 20 kilometers from Ulm, Germany. Roy and I were assigned to Headquarters Company, Roy as a message center clerk and I as an intelligence center clerk. Thus began an interesting, productive, and fun year in Germany.

Germans were hired to do all the KP duty, and our Army company also hired a German tailor and a German barber. So our haircuts were all free, as was all of our mending work. The food was the best that we had in the Army—even better than the food at the carpenter school. The cooks lived in the barracks with the rest of the company, and it would have been unwise for them to serve food that was badly prepared. Our barracks were large stone buildings—warm and comfortable in the winter and cool in the summer. The barracks had housed German soldiers during World War II. Thus, they were riddled with bullet holes on the outside as a result of air raids.

Roy and I immediately went looking for an LDS servicemen's group, but found none on base. We did find three or four LDS men, but none were active and no one knew if there was an LDS group in the area. After much searching, we finally located an address for an LDS servicemen's group that was meeting in Ulm, and we took a train there the next Sunday. We located the group—small but thriving—and thereafter joined with them every Sunday.

I soon found that there was nothing to do as an intelligence center clerk, and I was bored to death. When the battalion operations clerk went home, I asked if I could take his place, and I was permitted to do so. In this new assignment I had something to do, and I liked that much better. I was responsible for typing all the orders and other correspondence that went from the battalion operations section to the line companies. It was a big job, and I was busy all day long. Both the speed and accuracy of my typing increased dramatically. Captain Detlefsen, the officer who was in charge of battalion operations, liked my writing style. As a result, he and other Army officers started coming to me to have special, personal work done, such as drafting letters requesting special schooling, and so forth. I did this work willingly, since it kept me busy and also kept me from getting unpleasant assignments—such as guard duty—when the battalion went into the field.

As PFCs, Roy and I were earning $110 per month. Out of this came $11 for tithing, and we allowed ourselves $3 per week for spending money. This left $87 per month, which was sent home as savings. It was hard to get by on just $3 per week spending money, but we managed. Since we had little money to spend, we spent our evenings and weekends reading. In the year I was in Germany, I read the entire Bible, as well as all seven volumes of the Documentary History of the Church, Jesus the Christ, the Articles of Faith, and other assorted Church books. I knew that if I was going on a mission I had to be prepared. I felt I was far behind other young LDS men my age, since I had never attended primary, Sunday School, seminary, or other places where LDS youth are taught the Gospel.

Our quiet way of life must have been apparent to the other men in the company, because Roy and I soon became "bankers" of sorts. On payday, most of the soldiers would go into town, get drunk, and generally come back without even a penny left in their pockets. They would then face a whole month of having no money, waiting for the next payday, and then the process would be repeated. To break the cycle, men occasionally came to Roy and me after payday and asked us to hold some of their money over the weekend. This ensured that these men, after their monthly binge, would have at least some money available for necessities during the remainder of the month. We were happy to perform this service, and we soon became "bankers" to several men in the company.


The U.S. Army served as an Occupation Force in Germany. Because we were occupying the land, it was necessary for us to go into the field on “maneuvers” every couple of months to hone our military skills. Our Battalion generally went into the Black Forest area of Germany to perform these maneuvers. The Black Forest was a bleak and dreary place, and I detested going there. Each trip into the field lasted between one and two weeks, and during the time we were out we slept in small pup tents. While on one of these field trips I had my twenty-second birthday. A picture of me on my birthday, by my pup tent, is included in this history. The night before this birthday we

had a snowfall in the Black Forest, and the weight of the snow collapsed my pup tent on top of me. It was a struggle to crawl out of my tent the morning of my birthday. That's one birthday I've never forgotten.

We took advantage of being in Europe and traveled whenever we could. We took a number of leaves, including one ten-day leave to France, England, and the Netherlands, and another ten-day leave to Austria, Italy, and Switzerland. The train fare on the second leave, which took us from Leipheim, Germany to Vienna, Austria; then to Rome, Italy; then to Berne, Switzerland; and then back to Leipheim, was $15 for the round trip. We also took several shorter trips through the German countryside. While we were in Europe, the Swiss Temple was dedicated and we got to attend the dedication. We also traveled to Berchtesgaden—a large resort area in Germany that was a favorite of Adolph Hitler, and where he had his famous "Eagle's Nest" hideaway. The reason for us going to Berchtesgaden was to attend an LDS servicemen's conference, which was conducted by Elder Spencer W. Kimball of the Quorum of Twelve Apostles. This conference was the highlight of my year in Europe. During the day-long conference, Elder Kimball spoke in a powerful manner, urging the servicemen to hold fast to their standards even though they were surrounded with immorality, and to remain active in the Church.

After the conference, Elder Kimball interviewed all the servicemen who wanted to visit with him. I took advantage of this wonderful opportunity, and thus had my first interview as a member of the Church. (I had not been interviewed when I was baptized, nor when I was ordained a Teacher, Priest, or Elder.) This interview lasted only a few minutes, but I was deeply impressed with Elder Kimball. I felt his genuine love and concern for me as a person and as a newly baptized member of the Church, and I came away from the interview with an even stronger desire to serve a mission. At this conference, the Ulm group was organized into a formal servicemen's branch of the Church, and I was made first counselor in the branch presidency. Grant Heartel, from Salt Lake City, was named the branch president. I was surprised at my call as a counselor in the branch presidency, since the branch contained several returned missionaries and I knew little about Church administration. But I was really pleased to have the opportunity to serve.

In the spring of 1955, Roy and I looked forward to being promoted to the rank of corporal in the U.S. Army. Allocations for rank advancement had been coming regularly to our company, and our names were nearing the top of the list. When the month came that we were supposed to be promoted, the company commander was gone on leave. The officer left in charge had taken a dislike to Roy and me for some reason, and he had openly stated that we wouldn't be promoted if there was any way he could stop it. This worried us, because once you were passed over for promotion, it was difficult to get reinstated to the promotion list. On the morning that the promotion allocations came, this officer received a call instructing him to report immediately to Division Headquarters in Ulm. This was a great stroke of good fortune, because the next officer in charge liked Roy and me very much. As acting commanding officer, he immediately submitted our names to Battalion Headquarters for promotion to the rank of corporal. By the time the first officer got back from Ulm that night, we both had our corporal stripes sewed on, and there was nothing he could do about it. We then started receiving $132 per month as

corporals, which meant that we were able to save over $100 per month toward our missions throughout the rest of our time in the service.

Our stay in Germany was quiet, interesting, and productive. We loved the German food, and the beautiful countryside. Everything was neat and orderly, and spoke of an intelligent and industrious people. Although we were Occupation Troops, the Germans were friendly toward us, and there was rarely an unpleasant incident between soldiers and citizens.

Although Germany was beautiful, it was also wet and cold, which caused me to have many sinus infections. These infections would cause the eustachian tubes to my ears to stiffen and remain open, which in turn allowed my voice to travel up into my ears. This was unpleasant and made it difficult for me to speak. I worried about how effective I would be as a missionary, and so I spent many days fasting and praying that I would be called to an area where my sinus infections would be minimized. While in Germany, I even had my tonsils removed a second time, hoping that the operation would stop the infections. But the infections persisted, and I was deeply concerned about where I would be called to serve as a missionary.

Our year in Germany passed quickly, and by November 1955 we were looking for orders to return to the United States. We were hoping to fly home, but when our orders came they indicated that we were to return home by boat. So in early November we boarded the train for Bremerhaven, where we had landed in Germany about a year before. After a two-day ride on the train through the German countryside, we arrived in Bremerhaven, boarded our ship, and were on our way home.

The boat we were assigned to was a "liberty" ship of World War II vintage. It was designed to carry cargo—not men—so it had only 17 showers for the 1,500 men that were aboard it. The ventilation system was poor, and little air circulated in the lower hatches where we were bunked. With men getting seasick all about and no ventilation, the stench soon became overpowering, and I spent as much time as possible on deck. I didn't get seasick on the return voyage, but I found the trip cramped and uncomfortable. In eight days we arrived at New York, but we were informed that a dock strike had just begun and that we would have to wait for docking space. We then circled just off the coast for nine days. During this time our food ran out, and the Navy people opened emergency rations, which we considered to be inedible. These rations were stringy and dark red in color, and probably consisted of horse meat. Finally, after 17 days on the boat, we received permission to dock. The night before we were to dock, I got up at 2:00 a.m. and went down to take a shower—the first one since we had left Germany 17 days before. There was no hot water, but it was the most welcome shower I have ever taken.

The United States looked glorious! I could see why the Lord called it a land choice above all other lands. How grateful I felt to have been born in the United States! Germany had been beautiful, but I then realized that it was nothing compared to my own homeland. I had no desire to leave again.

Roy and I were shipped immediately to Fort Sheridan, Illinois. There, after many lectures directed toward persuading us to reenlist, we were finally discharged from the Army on

December 5, 1955. We boarded a train for Burlington, arriving there just two days short of two years from the time we had left. In that two years all of our purposes for going into the Army had been accomplished. We had served our country well as soldiers. In addition, we had saved enough to go on a mission, we had spent much time studying and growing in the Gospel, and we had qualified ourselves to receive the GI Bill to assist in our education. The two years had been hard, but highly productive, and we were grateful for the experience.